345 puberty, by his father. The performance of this role entails continence (bokeka) for the person who undertakes it, even with respect to the spouse. A violation of this rule prevents healing of the wound or at least makes the process very long and difficult. (1)

[155] 1. A similar bokeka applies to anyone nursing a large gangrenous ulcer (wǎlé).

The foreskin that has been cut off is dried on the boifikó (tray or shelf). Then no one bothers with it any longer, and it usually remains there, dusty and dirty, for an indefinite period of time if the rats leave it alone.

[177] In the centers the young people are beginning to neglect the native skilled in circumcising and resort instead to European surgeons.

Circumcision is not an occasion for feasts or ceremonies. [54] Sometimes a man who is rich and vain will give a feast, but this is not at all a common practice.

The term "to circumcise" is translated in Lonkundo as téna bomoí, "to cut off the foreskin." The less vulgar term and one used much more frequently is téna nsóngé, "to cut off the tip." A much too decent circumlocution is téna batói, "to cut off the ears."

The reason for this custom has already been given in Chapter I, Part II, Article II, 2.

Article VIII. Education

• 348 357 From an early age a Nkundó child must perform various small services for his parents, especially in the household; he is asked to draw water, fetch firewood, take care of a little brother or sister, etc. The demands for such services are addressed chiefly to girls, but boys are not at all exempt. By the very nature of things, however, the latter are less frequently asked to help.

Quite early a boy may accompany his father on trips, at meetings, legal debates, etc. The father makes a bow and arrows for him and teaches him the art of using them. The great pastime

857 for young boys is hunting and fishing by all sorts of methods suitable
868 for their age. Little by little an adolescent learns the usual tasks
and everything that he needs to know in order to survive and obtain food and shelter. His instruction is completed by his companions and above all by the exigencies of life.

A girl learns housework and farming. Very early her mother braids a small basket for her in order to accustom her to carrying loads. She also participates in the women's fishing.

In general one has the impression that the girls are far more active than the boys. But I think that this difference is due to the fact that the boys are almost always in the forest, while the girls remain in the village and are therefore noticed more. As a matter of fact in our missions it cannot be said that the boys work less well than the girls, quite the contrary.

The girls practice the culinary art, not only with their mothers but also -- as in Belgium -- in a game (ioto).

The children do not study the history, laws, and traditions
927 of their clan or tribe. They learn them in the [508] course of
949 events, either by hearing them described or by asking questions. Often their parents explain such matters on their own initiative, not according to a definite program but rather when opportunities arise. A young man can learn many things especially by accompanying his father on visits, on trips, at meetings and deliberations, or by listening attentively to the performances of troubadours who play the longombé (mandolin). The astonishing knowledge of usages and customs, ancestral laws, history, the wisdom of the ancients, proverbs, fables, etc., possessed by some youngsters, to the point of excelling their elders, can be explained by their faithfulness in following papa instead of continuously enjoying the freedom of the forest. I have encountered more than one instance of this sort which was explained primarily on the basis of the boy's attachment to his father.

The Nkundó child begins to hum popular tunes and imitate
944 the rhythmic movements of the dancers when he is barely able to walk. Little girls, especially, practice special dances of their own. Then, little by little, the children mix with the group of adult dancers and are able to join the chorus, though they must remain in the rear.

Parents teach their children the trades that they themselves know: forging, wood sculpture, the weaving of mats and baskets, pottery making, etc.

With respect to ethics, the children learn a great deal from experience, but parents do not fail to teach them rules of politeness, decorum, good breeding, and the great principles of social relations. As in Europe, however, there are degrees of concern or indifference in this realm. The moral code taught is the one the parents themselves practice. It is centered above all on family and society: respect toward members of the family, mutual assistance, respect for the welfare of others, fear of the opposite sex, etc. But all of it has a naturalistic basis: the reason given for adherence to such precepts is limited to the unpleasant consequences [509] that would otherwise result. Reprimands and even corporal punishments for infractions are not unknown. But they are chiefly due to exasperation and therefore mixed with anger and without any continuity or consistent idea. Once the anger has passed the threats remain sterile. For punishment the parents resort chiefly to blows, but other penalties are also common. For instance, one of our catechists when he was young (between 1880 and 1890) had removed a little bird trapped in a snare belonging to one of his cousins. As soon as his father heard what he had done, he gave the youngster a good scolding and made him go to bed without supper.

As a girl approaches puberty, her mother teaches her the rights and duties of a married woman. She teaches her how to behave and conduct herself in order to be a good wife and mother. She does this so that her daughter may find a good husband, and so that the union may be stable and not produce too many palavers or trouble.

Formerly, children were not allowed to see the dances of adults. They were chased away and had to amuse each other. This was an excellent means for preserving morality among the youth and retaining their respect for their elders. Therefore it is most regrettable that it has been abandoned.

When the children reach puberty, they no longer like to sleep in their parent's home. The parents do not send them away, but on the other hand, they do not oppose this desire on the part of young people which, they say, springs from a feeling of modesty. The boys go one way, the girls another; for example, they may appropriate an unoccupied hut belonging to their father or go to close relatives, or they may try and find a place in quarters occupied by a group of boys or girls. If no house is available, the boys band together to build a hut which they share. Nowadays they begin very early [110] to build individual huts or one for two, in order to thus enjoy a greater freedom.

On the trees in the forest one finds a kind of hard mushroom called lonkitola. When a child begins to speak, the mushroom is placed between his teeth, so that he will bite into it and thus learn not to express himself thoughtlessly but to hold back his words (-sikitola) and think before speaking.

One can often observe parents and other persons actively helping children to express themselves correctly, especially in correcting mistakes, pronunciation, and errors with regard to proper nouns, by giving them the proper words and even explaining grammatical forms and subtle distinctions between certain terms. "This is how it must be said; that means something else. This plant is called thus and so, etc."

Therefore, although a Nkundó child is very free to spend his days as he pleases and, perforce, learns many things through personal experience, it would be wrong to say that his parents are not interested in his education and do not contribute to it. They participate actively by their advice, their explanations, and their demonstrations. Needless to say, their role is neither as important nor as continuous as in many civilized societies. Besides it is very difficult, and often unfair, to compare our people's situation with that of Europeans; the difference in circumstances is too great. But we must point out in all fairness that the Nkundó do make efforts in this realm, although the results are hardly apparent with respect to moral education (1), because there are many flaws, gaps,

1. We will say no more about material and economic education, which can not be criticized.